

# Send in the clowns

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

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I've got a long-overdue confession to make; it dawned on me that I've been unforgivably neglecting the 'stunted-salami-firing, rollerskating errand boy-clown' genre. To redress the balance I'll be taking a look at Rolling Ronny developed by Touch Of Magic, and will have to get to the rest later. It'll be a 'Long and Winding Road' I'm sure. Hey, you know who else has got his own game? Paul McCartney! Yeah, I know.



Despite looking uncannily like Starbyte's Beepo from Clown-o-Mania and being drawn by the same talented artist, Orlando Petermann, you play as Ronny. A unique, beautiful butterfly with his own independent thoughts, aspirations and personality. Just like all the other birthday party entertainers sporting a big red nose, crazy hair and Wheelies attached to the soles of their feet.



He's an office gopher by trade. You know, someone tells him to 'go for' this and 'go for' that and he asks "how high?". Ronny is dressed as a clown because he's a graduate of Fieldington Clown College (class of 1982), and has a City and Guilds qualification in pie-throwing and falling over. I suppose by September 1991 the clowning industry had wound down and he simply forgot to get changed. Nevertheless, as if to verify his erstwhile circus credentials, big top music plays on a constant loop in the background.



A mundane career segue you might assume, only now Ronny is about to embark on the challenge of a lifetime. A bungled heist has resulted in the scurrilous gang of criminals sequestering away the loot in 'gaudily-coloured boxes' dotted around Fieldington. On behalf of Scotland Yard you've been recruited as an undercover detective to track down the jewellery cases and deliver them to Inspector Cuff before the local degenerates discover their whereabouts and recover them instead. Get the case cleared up before it hits the headlines and you'll save his blushes and be rewarded with a luxury holiday to Switzerland. Oops, I may have just given away the finale. Sorry.



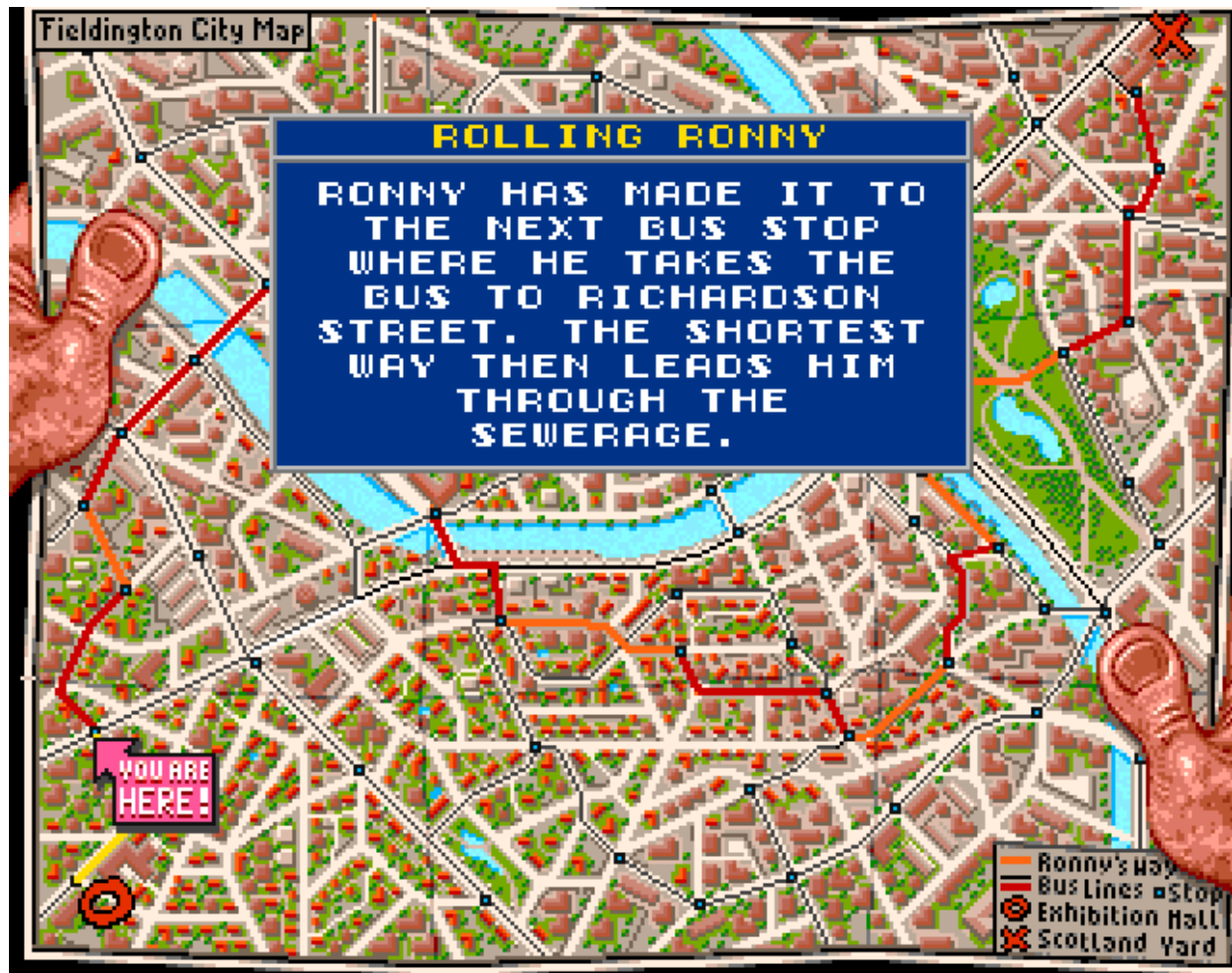
Covert agents usually go to great lengths to blend into the background so they can go about their business unnoticed. Ronny is all set to turn that antiquated nonsense on its head by becoming the world's most conspicuous private eye. You'd have to be a complete nut-job to believe it could possibly work... or a genius!



En route to Scotland Yard's HQ you'll need to deliver parcels to raise enough cash to travel by bus to the next of the nine levels. You can choose to accept, decline or haggle over the fee earned, measured in *pence*. Not *pounds* and pence, just pence. These are pitiful, well below the minimum wage enforced by the Trade Boards Act 1909. Ronny would have been better off working as a stunt double for Pennywise.

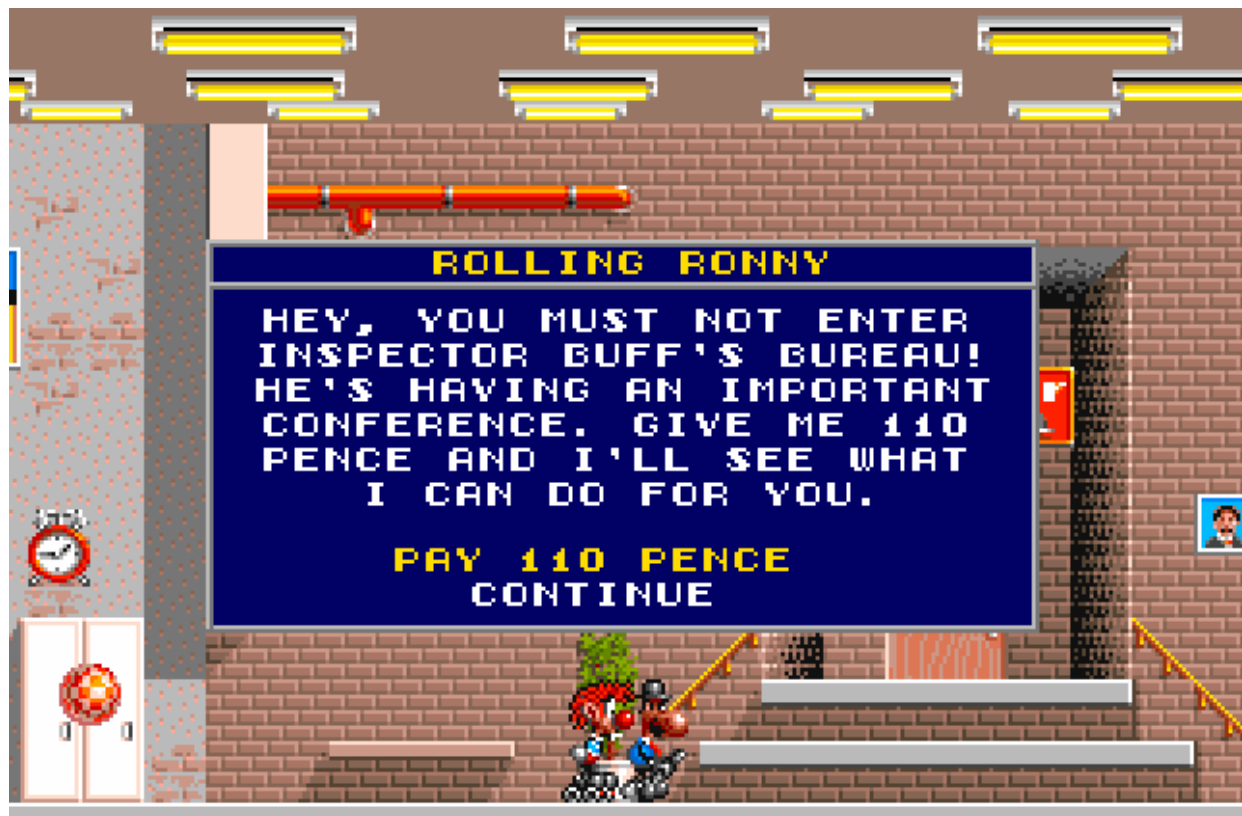






You'll need to bribe your way in to see the inspector to relay the good news and handover the stolen goods. As corrupt as that sounds, at least he's cheap; 110 pence will do the trick on this occasion.





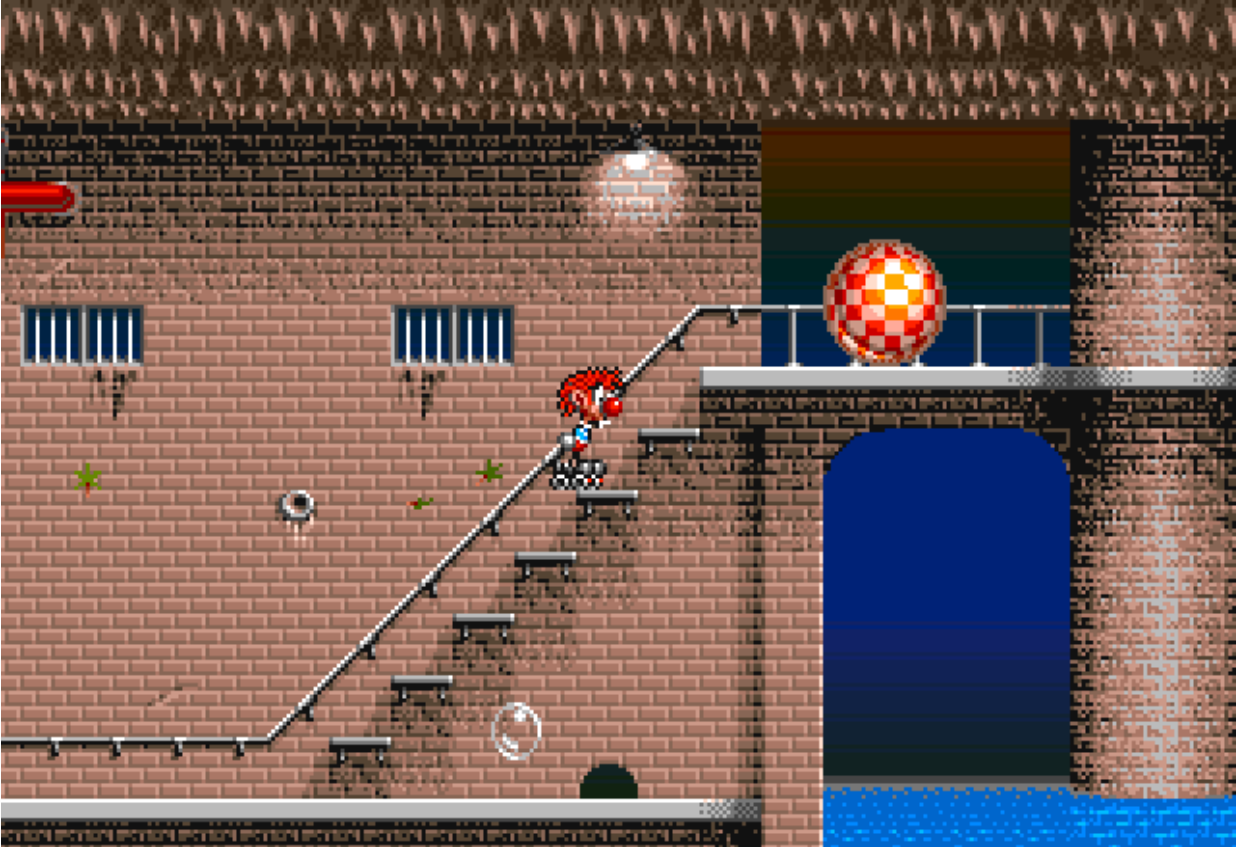
Coins can be shaken free from thin air as you bound about the environments, derived from kills brought about by your lead-infused stunted salamis (blood money!), or accrued through performing errands. It all counts.



Shooting your weapon - devised by the Butcher's Guild - saps some of your energy so you'll need to use that sparingly in dispatching the baddies. These are a motley crew engendered by an unfortunate explosion at the Magic Circle HQ. See, 'The Word Factory' who wrote the manual (and the one for Cadaver) have thought of everything. Invent a justification for including all manner of random wackiness and no-one can possibly question the logic of throwing as much mud at the wall and hoping some of it sticks. That's where many developers went wrong; they failed to, er... make 'sense' of the nonsense with a proper backstory.



As such you'll face sentient desk lamps and unicycles a la Pixar's Luxo Jr. and Red's Dream. There are also snowmen and Victorian businessmen skulking about in the sewer, Amiga Boing balls, and the man-hole-cover-rolling 'Monkey Kong' who in no way was inspired by Donkey Kong, that's for sure. Later he gets bored and slopes off back to the jungle, leaving the 'barrels' to roll themselves. Curiously the Batman signs that constitute another foe are in fact genuine Batman signs and not *Fatman* signs. Oh, wait, Black Legend got there first. That explains that one.



An unexpected adversary - one of the fiercest in fact - comes in the form of... grass. Yes, as a roller-skater with deadlines and targets to meet, this is your worst nightmare. Time is money, and grass will only slow you down. I've heard *too much* will turn you into a Rastafarian, and they never get *anything* done.



To help even up the odds, weapon and capability upgrades can be purchased in shops with your scavenged spare change. These populate your four-item inventory and are activated using the F1-F4 buttons.



They include a Superjump, invulnerability Megahonk, enemy-freezing Stenchalizer, Powersneeze smart bomb, and a Magnetofluct employed to attract difficult to reach items. Coins containing steel are magnetic thanks to the iron component in their core. That's not a game mechanic, it's a fascinating real-world fact brought to you by Kookosity. Use it wisely trivia fans.



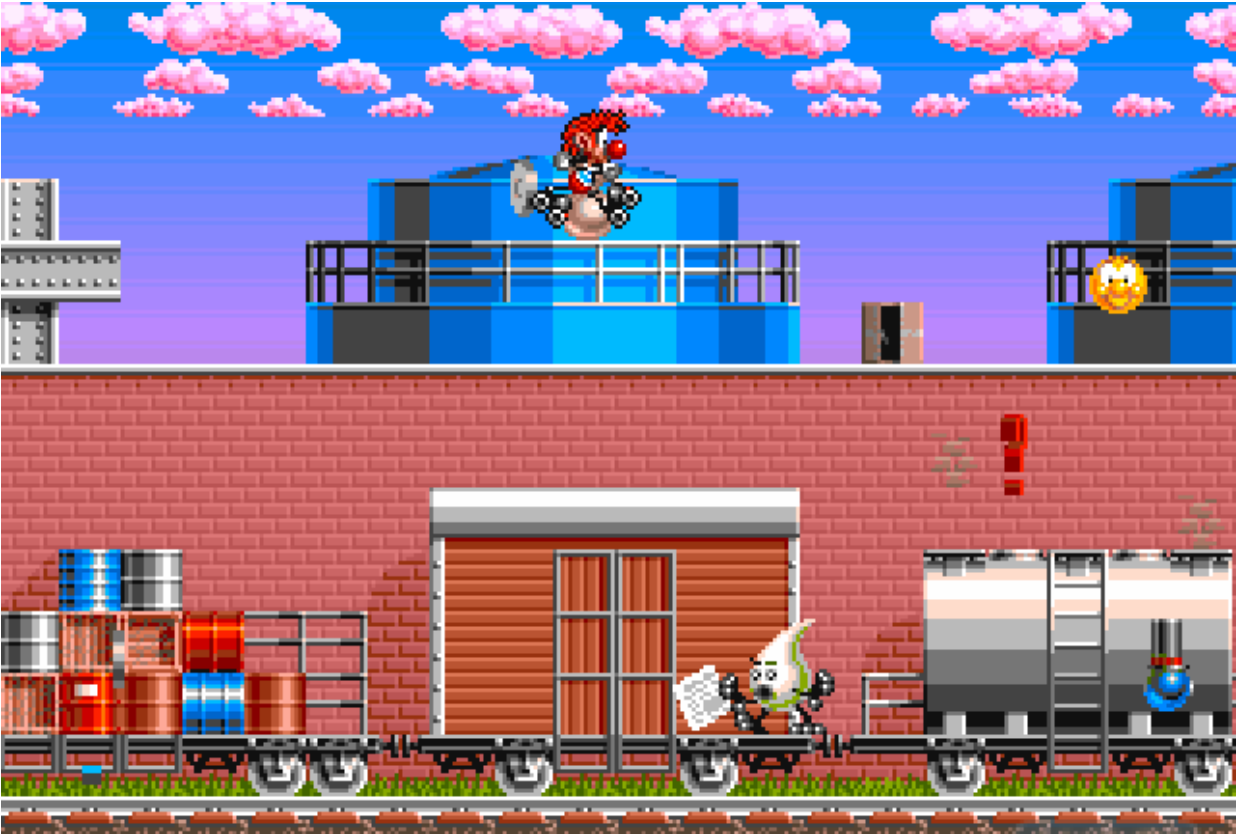
When you kick the bucket you respawn where you died, interestingly by ascending skyward dangling from a helium balloon. As you approach the top of the screen you begin to descend, and this is where things get a tad inventive. Gifted with control over your safe return to the ground you can avoid that old platforming niggles of re-emerging on top of the git who wiped you out in the first place, only to perish again, ad infinitum.



Thanks to coder, Rene Straub, controls are pretty tight and responsive, *too* much so really. Oddly no inertia is in effect, despite gliding everywhere on wheels. Stop pushing the joystick left or right and you come to an instant halt, which all feels very unnatural and makes the game that much easier to master.

Reminiscent of Bart vs the Space Mutants, level structure is linear and formulaic, mostly operating on a single plane. Zaniness too, particularly in the enemy design, is a common link.





Where Rolling Ronny diverges, excels even, is in the graphics department. It's title and logo screen are stunning, while the rest of the artwork is charming in a subtle, minimalist way. Three layers of parallax scrolling are evident in the distant sky, with copper gradients constituting the lower backdrops. Together the visuals offer a whole sweet shop brimming with candy for the peepers.

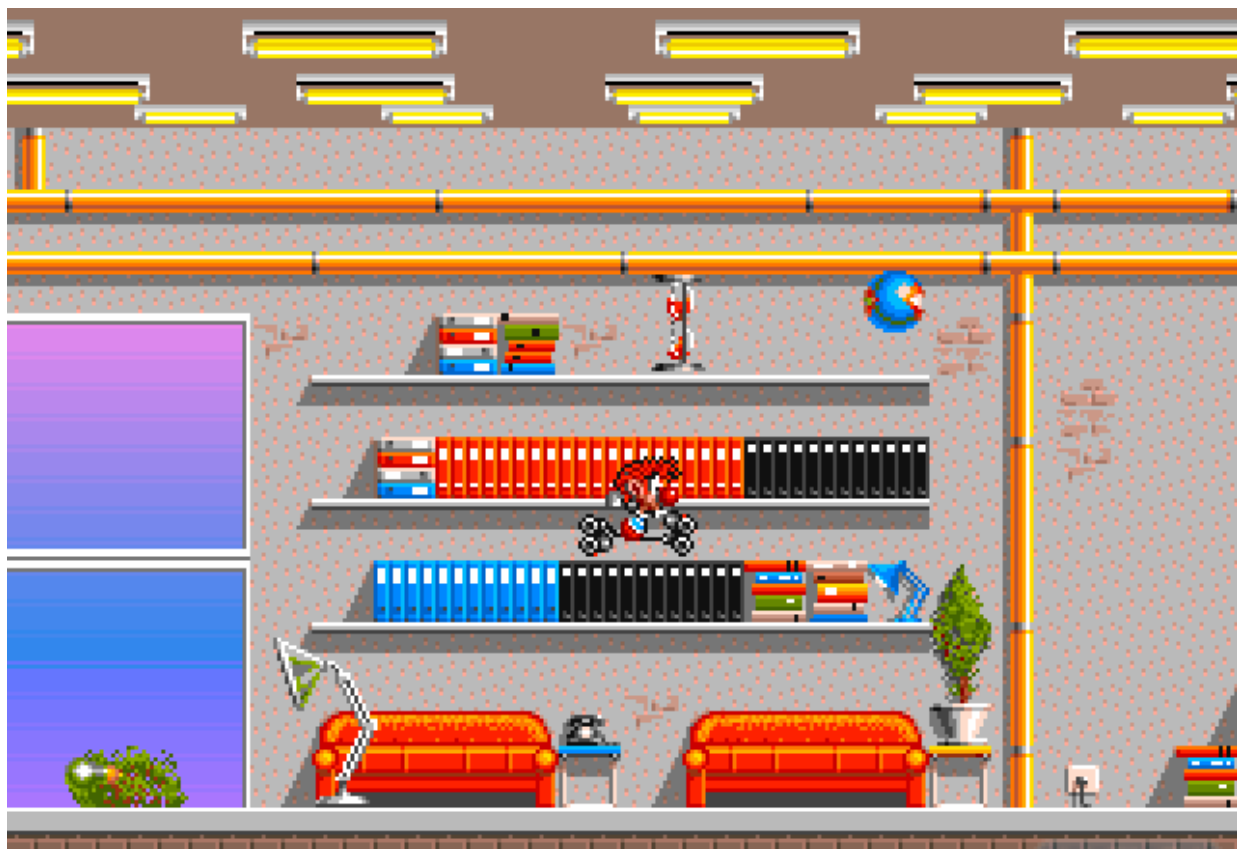
# ROLLING RONNY

## THE ERRAND-BOY





According to the previews the game was originally intended to take place only in offices, and Ronny was described as a 'teaboy'.



I expect this was considered a tad too pedestrian and thus kookyfied to raise it above the run of the mill competition. Starbyte certainly achieved that with the aesthetics and plot, though sadly the gameplay was somewhat of an afterthought.

Ronny is extremely repetitive, long-winded and dull, posing little challenge to veteran gamers. On a positive note, it may have given a few coulrophobics the jolt they desperately need to get a grip.

